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The Neglect of a known Duty is Sin.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
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S E R M O N, &c.

J A M E S iv. 17.

TO HIM WHO KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, AND
DOETH IT NOT, TO HIM IT IS SIN.

THE morality of human actions, that is, the quantity of Good or Evil that really belongs to them, will to a certain degree depend upon the circumstances with which they are attended: yet there are some, the nature of which is so fixed and determined, as to be unalterable by any circumstances whatsoever. With respect to these the point of Duty cannot remain a doubt with any rational agent. And even in those instances in which there may be some room for Moral Casuistry, the Line of Right and Wrong may be seen by those who are willing to perceive it, and be guided by it.

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It is allowed that God gives to different men different talents, and those different talents also in different portions: and according to our use or abuse of them, will stand our Moral Merit, and our future reprobation, or acceptance with God be determined.

The original endowments of intellectual abilities, or of bodily powers, are not only bestowed in very different degrees, but these gifts of God may be improved or debased by the subsequent circumstances of our situation in life, and the opportunities afforded us of bringing them into action. This improvement or debasement of our natural faculties, depends principally upon the manner in which we have been trained from our infancy; that is to say, on the course of our Education, which may give or may prevent either good or bad inclinations, and thus impeding or improving our moral faculties accordingly qualify us for the proper knowledge of our duty. And how great soever may be the original difference of the talents bestowed upon us, I have not the least doubt but that, by a proper education, all persons might be made good and valuable members of Society: might be instructed

ed at least in the knowledge, and probably induced to the practice of what is Good. All, for instance, might be trained in notions and accustomed to actions of early Benevolence; for there is no such thing as Original or Innate Cruelty: and it is impossible to say what happy change in human Society this single circumstance would produce. The turn of mind and course of conduct being built upon Universal Benevolence, as the foundation of moral and social behaviour, would be at once the Production of Universal Good.

But we have cause to lament that even in the Countries enlightened by improved reason, by learning, by religion, sufficient attention is not given to this method of Education. There are a thousand little sources of vexation to the young and tender mind, not yet able to form proper judgments, which from the very frame of our constitution occasion anger and resentment. These emotions, not properly checked or improperly directed, like every movement within us, whether good or bad, will grow upon us and gain strength by indulgence; till at length overpowering all the remonstrances of reason or benevolence, we be-

come the slaves of Passion, Tyranny, and Cruelty.

In this unhappy situation, even if we should know what is Good, it is not likely that we should practise it. Our hearts are hardened; we are prepared to admit every thing bad, even premeditated Inhumanity. In all such instances we fall directly under the condemnation in the text. The Evil which we do from our subserviency to passion, tyranny and cruelty, is very much aggravated by the knowledge which we have or might have of the opposite Good, which at the same time we must be conscious is our Duty. And as the Text seems to deduce Moral Guilt from the Knowledge joined to the neglect of doing Good — (to him who knoweth to do Good, and doeth it not, to him it is Sin) — it may not be improper to examine how far Ignorance of what is Right, may be admitted as a Plea, or be considered as a palliation for doing what is Wrong. For though it is said that the Neglect of Duty combined with the Knowledge of it constitutes Sin, yet when joined with Ignorance, it will not in all cases be entitled to Pardon.

Ignorance then according to the received
distinction

distinction is of two sorts, that which we could, and that which we could not have conquered.

In those uncultivated regions of the earth, where the poor natives have but very dark and confused notions even of any Supreme Being, whose minds are not informed with the belief of a Creator of this world, and an overruling Providence, who consequently are totally ignorant of the Institution and the Duties of Christianity; it will not be expected that they should practise, or even know that Good, which is very justly required as an indispensable Duty from those who have in these points been favoured with proper information. And here the degree of Guilt in doing Wrong, or not doing Right, will be less in proportion to the degree of unavoidable ignorance under which they laboured. Nevertheless, even in this situation something will be required, since God hath not any where left himself without witness; but has given to the human mind, as its faculties open, a knowledge of Good and Evil, a natural perception of the difference of Actions, and a consciousness that some are preferable to others. How far the obeying or resisting the impulse of
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this Natural Light may entitle them to the favour or subject them to the displeasure of Almighty God, is a point which we are not authorised to determine, nor is it any way necessary to enter upon this sort of Casuistry. It is sufficient for us to know that God, the universal parent, will deal by them as he dealeth by us; that he will not impute Sin for not doing the Good which they could not know; that he will judge them, not according to what they have not, but according to what they have received, and that they, as well as we, are in the hands of a God of infinite mercy.

But the case comes nearer to our own in all instances where persons might know, or actually do know to do Good, and yet do it not: and to all these it undoubtedly has the Nature of Sin: that is to say, their conduct immediately subjects them to the just displeasure of God, and will be aggravated in proportion to the abuse of the Talents given to their charge, and committed to them in Trust for their due improvement.

There was a time when in this country, though Christianity was nominally professed, yet a great ignorance of many of its important duties was every where encouraged,
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and every where predominant. A dark veil was industriously drawn between the humble worshippers in the Temple, and the real altar of God. All that was behind this priestly veil was carefully concealed by the Priests who drew it; who by keeping the people in profound Ignorance, amused them by vain external ceremonies, and groundless pretences to such Powers as God never bestowed on man. How far in this case Ignorance of that Good which might have been known, may be available with God towards pardon, I presume not to say. But certainly, even in this corrupted state of Christianity, the belief of a Supreme Creator, of a Redeemer, of a future Life after Death, and a state of Reward and Punishment, was universally taught by their Priests, though under some circumstances of error and misrepresentation. The natural bent too of the human mind to Social Love, and acts of kindness, would be improved by the precepts of Religion. And from these principles, properly attended to, great information might have been gained by every one of the Good that he might do, and especially in every thing relative to the important duty of Universal Benevolence. Ignorance

rance in this case is of that sort that might have been conquered, and therefore the not doing the Good which might have been known will have in it, in some degree, the Nature of Sin.

But with respect to ourselves, the case is very different indeed from the instances just mentioned. At that æra, known by the name of the Reformation, many corruptions were removed, many absurd opinions were set aside, and many indefensible practices were no longer required. The bulk of the People were no longer kept in ignorance of their duty. The Scriptures, hitherto concealed in an unknown tongue, were now translated into their own Language, and laid open to their view. They were permitted, they were invited, they were commanded to Search these Scriptures as containing the words of Eternal Life. And it is the fundamental principle of the Reformation, the very corner stone on which our Religion, as Protestants, stands, That Religious knowledge should be communicated: That every thing necessary to Salvation is to be found in these sacred volumes: That it is not only a privilege, but a duty, that every one from this authority alone should
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be fully persuaded in his own mind, and then from motives of Conscience and Integrity form his practice according to that persuasion. And all this is laid down in such plain and easy characters, that he who runs may read, and he who reads must understand.

Now even under the Jewish Law and in the Prophetic Writings, the rule of Moral Practice is to adhere strictly to Justice and to Mercy. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is Good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do Justly and to love Mercy. But if we look into the new Testament, we shall there see that the whole institution of Christianity is calculated to establish the principle and promote the practice of Universal Benevolence. We are ordered to do to all others as we are desirous that they should do to us. We are commanded to be kindly affectioned, and tender hearted, and to extend these tender affections even to our Enemies. We are told that the genuine fruit of the Christian Spirit is love, and peace, and gentleness, and meekness. We are informed that the benevolent spirit of Christianity is of superior excellence to all that we can pretend to
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by the profession of our Faith in this world, or from our hopes of happiness in a future life. That Learning and Talents, and all human acquisitions shall fail, and without Charity come to nothing; but that Charity never faileth. That Faith, Hope, and Charity, will all indeed abide, and in the day of Retribution will have their merit, but that the greatest of these is Charity, or Universal, and Disinterested Benevolence. For this is the true import, and the Christian Sense of that Expression. Our Saviour also positively declares not only that the end of his Institution is Benevolence, but that this disposition of mind is the true title to Mercy at the hand of God: that the merciful are blessed, because they shall obtain Mercy.

Nothing then can possibly be more plain than the Duty of every one who professeth himself to be a Protestant Christian. Every one who makes this profession must know that, by the positive ordinances of this Religion, he is to love Mercy, and to do Good. Knowing this, and not doing it, he stands Guilty in the sight of God. To him who knoweth to do Good, and doeth it not, to him it is Sin. And the degree of his Guilt must

must be estimated by these three circumstances, The Evidence of his Duty; The Importance of the Good which he knew and neglected to do; and, The Malignity of the Wickedness which instead thereof he deliberately purposeth to commit.

Probably by this time it may appear what is the principal object which I have in view, and that the intended application of this discourse is to that most horrible of all Iniquities, the Slave Trade. As Christians the evidence of our duty to practise Universal Benevolence, is as clear as any Mathematical Demonstration. The importance of the Good that would arise from performing our known duty in this respect, by doing Justice and shewing Mercy to the poor natives of Africa, is beyond our most extended conceptions. It is to rescue from extreme misery a world made compleatly wretched by our Vice and Profligacy, and to restore them to their Natural Rights, to their liberty and happiness. This is the Good which we have in our power, which we know to be our Duty, and which we refuse to perform. The malignity of the Wickedness it is not in mine, nor in any one's power to describe in its proper colours. I will take upon me
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to say, that considered in all its circumstances and connections, it is the most heinous Crime that any Individual or any National Body can possibly commit. And this is the Evil which we with conscious deliberation greedily perpetrate.

Apply then these positions, which are strictly true, to the persons who practise, or those who patronize the Slave Trade, and then try if by the utmost stretch of Imagination you can conceive an offender of deeper guilt to stand before the presence of God: That God who will judge both Nations and Individuals, and at his appointed time render to them according to these their works.

We read that there is a Sin which never shall be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. What offence can be so likely to incur this severe judgment as that which gives the Lie to the Holy Spirit of God, and is a combination of all dreadful crimes in One: and this too perpetrated under a wilful opposition to the evidence of known Truth, and against the conviction of Conscience. For no one in this enlightened age can possibly think that Violence, and Rapine, and Cruelty, and
Murther

Murder of the Innocent, can by any pretences whatsoever be justified. And these crimes, the constant attendants upon the Slave Trade, being wilfully committed, and deliberately defended by us, after having received the knowledge of that System of Truth which condemns such enormities, there remains no Sacrifice for this Sin. It being impossible for those who have been enlightened, and have tasted the good word of God in the Benevolence of the Gospel, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away from this Benevolence, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, because no greater evidence can be given of the malignant depravity of their conduct, than that which has been offered to them and rejected by them. The despite thus done to the Spirit of Grace, and the profane apostacy from the Essential Precepts of Christianity, in this Country too where Christianity is as yet protected as the Religion of the Land, concur to make our legalised Traffick in Men, a crime of immeasurable magnitude; exceeding all that were permitted in the Systems of Pagan Legislators.

Under their plans of Morality, even those
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of the Stoic Sect, we find too many proofs not only of great imperfection, but even the permission of horrible vices. And if we carry our examination to the other Sects, the Moral rules will be found still more impure. Whoever will be at the pains of consulting the Republic of Plato, that divine Philosopher (as he is frequently stiled) will see Institutes of Legislation so offensive to common decency, so pernicious to the welfare of Society, that one would think they could proceed only from the malignant brain of an infernal agent. This depravity indeed was in the times of unassisted reason, and of mental darkness both in Religion and Morality. What allowances are to be made for the want of divine revelation, in these instances, in which men doubtless might have made a better use of their natural powers, God only knows, and God alone can determine. The times of this ignorance, we are told, God winked at; but we are at the same time told that now a contrary conduct is expected; and that all men are commanded every where to repent. Therefore similar violences to the Moral sense of Right, and Wrong, under all the light and information of the Gospel, are enor-

enormities which admit not any palliation. The circumstances attached to Actions may sometimes in some degree soften their malignity. But in our situation, informed and enlightened as we are, there certainly are crimes, the atrociousness of which no circumstances whatsoever can possibly diminish; such in private life is the deliberate seduction of the Wife or daughter of a friend; in social, the unprovoked murder of an innocent and useful member of Society; and in a more extended consideration, that instance of our eternal reproach, our Legalised Traffick in Human Flesh. Yet as Individuals we impudently practise, as a Nation we impiously patronize this known and abominable Wickedness: therefore as Individuals, and as a Nation, we openly defy the Majesty of God; we condemn his menaces, and we dare him to execute his judgments upon us. Do we presume upon our strength? the strength of a worm; of a broken reed? or trust we in the delusive smiles of present prosperity? Let us bring to mind the fate of Tyre and Sidon. Their inhabitants were Merchants who passed over the Seas, for purposes not so flagitious as those of our Men-merchants. Their commerce

merce like ours ended in riches, and their riches like ours in profligacy. Therefore the Lord gave a commandment against the Merchant city. And though her Merchants were as Princes, and her Traffickers as the honourable of the earth, yet the Lord purposed to stain the pride of her glory, to bring into contempt her honourable men, to throw down her palaces, and bring her to desolation. Let us therefore be not only warned, but let us be reformed in time, before our feet slip upon the dark Mountains, and we fall for ever. A plan of Reformation has been proposed, against which no argument can be produced, but what is founded in the most sordid interest, the utmost contempt of Religion, the most inveterate hardness of heart, and the unfeeling insolence of Power. The principal objection to it is nothing more than a wilful and perverse confusion of the terms Abolition, and Emancipation, as if they were synonymous expressions, when at the same time it is known that the former is relative to the Traffick, the latter to the Persons, and that the former only is required to be immediate, the latter gradual and progressive, as circumstances shall make it convenient. And as it
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has been fully proved that this change may be effected to the encrease both of Political and Commercial Emolument, the rejection of it can be nothing better than an effort of the most abandoned Corruption. But if we thus obstinately continue this our conscious rebellion against the positive laws of God, of Justice, of Humanity, against the peculiar injunctions of our holy Religion, we must expect that our Iniquity will be visited with a Rod, and our Sin with Scourges.

But, in opposition to the humane attempt to eradicate and abolish this complicated evil, it is said that our benevolence will bring mischief to these poor Africans and prejudice to ourselves; we must therefore in this respect be guided by the strict rules of prudence. Our virtues, alas! are far from being of that impetuous cast as to be void of worldly understanding, or such as require the bit and bridle of Prudence, lest, like wild horses, they be prejudicial. Our benevolence is not of so enthusiastic a sort, that our exertions will be detrimental either to the poor Africans, or to ourselves, or to the general cause of humanity. These are idle, but what is worse, they are hypocritical pretences. If prudence is become so

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important a part of conduct, let us first put this prudential restraint upon our positive vices, before we so prudentially restrain our virtues; let us apply that counterfeit of virtue to check our career in profligacy; but in God's name let our benevolence, especially on this momentous call for it, take its free and natural course. Away then with those alarms, now industriously propagated, lest we should be too kindly affectioned to our fellow creatures. The friends of Slavery, and its concomitant crimes, give us no reason to think that in this respect they will be too virtuous. They might express some regard to Mercy without being righteous overmuch, or breaking in upon the consistency of a depraved and vicious character. If they must apply these restraints of a worldly wisdom, they ought to shew some portion of that Virtue which is thought to require this restraint. The bridle is not the Horse, nor is Prudence the Virtue which is to be regulated by it. And if the restraint of worldly prudence must be put upon their benevolence, that benevolence ought to exist which is to be thus kept from transgressing its bounds. But nothing can justify these persons in, first, totally eradicating

cating every benevolent emotion, and then impiously denominating this savage conduct, necessary Prudence, and a regard to general Humanity. This is an insult even upon common sense.

But farther, the extension of our benevolence to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, it is said, will be injurious to those who have hazarded their property in the promotion of it. Be it so. They who hazard their property knowingly for the commission of Evil, deserve at least to lose it. Confiscation of Property, or an ignominious death, established by the wisest legislators, may be called injurious to the Malefactor; nevertheless, there are circumstances which justify this loss of property, and the loss of life; and on this principle may be justified the loss of that property which has been advanced for the promotion of that most enormous of all iniquities, the Slave Trade. What benevolence may dictate, or generosity bestow, in consideration of the loss of Property advanced under the presumed sanction of a Law in itself absolutely unjustifiable, is a point not to be decided in this place: and far be it from me to lift my voice against the exertions, or to impede in

any degree the course of true benevolence, Whatsoever may be thought proper to be done in this respect, must ever be looked on, not as a matter or an act of Right, but of pure Generosity. For the Slave Commerce is fundamentally, and essentially Evil, and therefore ought to be abolished. It is an Evil utterly inconsistent with our Religion, under whatsoever form or denomination it may be professed. And notwithstanding that some Christians may have entertained indefensible notions of Christian Benevolence, contracting its nature, and confining its operation, yet is the Principle itself universally allowed to be an essential part of the Gospel of Christ. To reject entirely this fundamental principle of conduct, to refuse not only to be guided by its genuine influence, but to act in direct opposition to every tender emotion which the love of our Kind, which common Humanity can suggest, what is this but to refuse to do the Good which we know to be our Duty, and in effect to call the blood of the Covenant with which we have been sanctified an unholy thing. For Christ shed his blood, he laid down his life in love for us, to teach us that in like manner as he loved us,

us, so should we also love another. Not with that partial attachment which the opinions of Religious Sectarists, which the ties of kindred, which the connections of human policy, or which relation to the same country may inspire, but with that ardent, that truly Catholic affection which he felt and exercised for the Whole Human Race. For though his Gospel was to the Jew first, yet was it equally, in its original intent and destination, to the Gentile also; that is, to the Whole Race of Mankind, in what degree soever they may be distinguished from one another by the accidental circumstances of Climate, of Form, or of Complexion.

But farther, if we consider this cruel traffick not only as a direct contradiction to the known and fundamental precepts of Christianity, but as a public insult to the established religion of our Country, the promoters of it must be condemned as being neither Patriots, nor Politicians. No true Patriot, no sound Politician, ever declared war against the established religion of his country, without proposing something which he thought better in its stead. The reformation of Errors, and correction of Abuses in religious establishments, by what cause

soever introduced, is a part of Wisdom and of Duty: but to tear up and cast aside as of no worth a Primary and Essential Virtue, is the very reverse both of Duty and of Wisdom. And here, without any provision for amendment, the very foundations are torn up; and what, we may ask, hath our Religion done to deserve such overthrow? Let us bring to mind the conduct of the great men of antiquity, the philosophers, the legislators, the patriots of their respective ages, who though convinced of the falshood and absurdity of their religious systems, yet abstained from all insult either to received opinions or even to external ceremonies. The man most renowned amongst these venerable sages for virtue and wisdom, even after his condemnation, and on the very point of death, when he had nothing more to fear from expressing his opinion of those religious institutions which he despised, did nevertheless order a customary sacrifice to be performed, that he might not seem to insult the religion of his country. If Socrates then thought such compliance proper under an institution notoriously false and absurd, surely we might expect some decency of Attention from the professors of a religion

religion confessedly true and of diviue Origin. Surely we might expect some little regard to that fundamental Virtue which is the beginning and the end of the Christian Law *. But with a gloomy furliness we have repudiated Mercy, and are the most sanguinary of practical Apostates. This abominable traffick is founded in Commercial Avarice, and savage ferociousness of disposition equally preclusive of every particle of Humanity. For we stop not at Slavery, but add cruelty to cruelty both to mind and body, till the human frame is no longer able to support itself under the agonizing misery.

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* I wish it to be understood that I do not defend a Compliance with what is wrong merely because it happens to be established; for this would be to perpetuate Error: and on this principle taken at large, neither could any Reformation of what is amiss ever take place, nor indeed could Christianity itself have been established in the World. I only mean, as a sort of argument, a fortiori, that if Socrates could pay this deference with respect to what he knew to be Wrong, much more ought the Professors of Christianity to shew a decent regard to what they know to be Right, in the observance of the Duty of Universal Benevolence. The compliance of Socrates was with a harmless act of established Superstition; but the compliance required in the instance alluded to, is with the first virtue of the human heart, and the fundamental duty of the Christian Institution; the neglect of which is attended with the most extensive, and irreparable Injury.

This is an Evil attended with such aggravating circumstances, if there be any truth in our religion, as must excite the highest displeasure of Almighty God, whether we consider it as an act of Individuals or of the Nation. For we are taught in the Scriptures, that the infliction of Divine vengeance will certainly follow the conscious and obstinate commission of known Evil. But at the great day of Retribution, there will no longer exist distinct or separate nations; the whole Human Race will be assembled before the Universal Parent, then their Judge, and no distinction, we are taught, will then be made by him, but of the Righteous from the Wicked. And as, according to the divine law, national wickedness will not always pass unpunished, and as the distinction of nations will be then obliterated; it is a fair conclusion, that national crimes will receive their chastisement during the continuance of the offending nation. In confirmation of this opinion we have before us the fate of many kingdoms, and mighty empires far superior to ourselves in worldly greatness, whose magnificence was surpassed only by their wickedness. Then Providence interfered, and
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turned the means of their elevation to their downfall. They are now nothing more than an historical picture exhibited to us for our admonition. We like them became great and wicked, and now, notwithstanding the delusive appearance of Prosperity, bear the genuine marks of a declining people. For whoever is acquainted with the history of the world, and the operation of political, and moral causes, will see amongst us the same engines at work which produced their ruin. By Commerce we became rich, by riches we became luxurious, by luxury we are led to every vice that can deprave the heart of man. Thus Commerce, the means of our elevation, being now carried to the utmost length of Iniquity, will probably be the cause of our destruction. For, in the instance alluded to, it is of that unmeasurable enormity as to be no proper object of the Divine mercy. Especially if we consider it as directly counteracting the gracious designs of God in appointing Christ to be the Saviour of the Whole World. By this dispensation of things it was intended that the Gospel of Peace, and Liberty, and Goodwill amongst men should be given to all Nations. He was anointed to publish glad tidings,

tidings, to heal the broken hearted, to give liberty to the captives, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burthens, to let the oppressed go free, to break every yoke, and thus proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. What a contradiction to these gracious intentions is the whole of our conduct respecting the innocent and unoffending nations of Africa! if we consider the treatment they receive from us; first in being torn from their country and their friends by the violence of hard hearted ruffians, then doomed to chains and excruciating misery, and if they survive these calamities, in being sold for Slaves to merciless masters, not less cruel than the ruffians who forced them from their native land. Is this our Gospel of Peace and Liberty? Is this our proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord? If such be the conduct of Christians, the unconverted world must hear the name of Christ with horror. Thus do we by this abominable commerce defeat the gracious purposes of God, crucifying his Son afresh, and putting him to an open shame. But these things must sometime be accounted for; we know much better things than these which we practise. And this
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our better knowledge will be a great aggravation of our guilt. For the knowledge of Good unperformed is a fundamental rule for the estimation of moral demerit: our Saviour plainly considers it as such. If ye were blind, he says to the Pharisees, ye would have no Sin, but now, ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth. If I had not come, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their Sin. In these and many other passages, agreeing in principle with that in the text, the doctrine of Scripture confirms the dictates of common sense. He who is totally and unavoidably ignorant, is not amenable to that law to which his knowledge really doth not extend. And although in the present state of things amongst us, we cannot expect much either of the Theory or Practice of Christianity, or indeed any decent regard to Religion from Politicians, Merchants or Mariners, yet so much they must know of the general laws of Justice and Humanity, and of that religion which they outwardly profess, as to be conscious that in the practice or protection of the Slave Trade, they really have not any cloak for their Sin. They cannot but know that the unjust invasion of another's

other's rights, of his property, his liberty, his life, they cannot but know that Violence and Rapine, Cruelty, and Murther are crimes which they ought not to commit. One proof that they do so, is the subornation of evidence to palliate these things by infamous misrepresentation, and a manifest violation of Truth, Integrity, and Honour*. Another, the procuration even of a Minister of the Gospel to falsify the sense of Scripture, and pretend to shew that this shameful practice is defensible by divine authority†. It is a crime of great profligacy designedly to wrest and torture the holy Scriptures to the defence of that wickedness which they condemn; for the Scripture is every where favourable to the proper liberty, and real happiness of man.

But, arguments from Scripture, and the obligations of divine authority are now indeed of little force. The topics of Religion, Justice, Humanity, are nothing better than subjects of derision to merchantile men, and worldly politicians. They admit not into their calculations these articles entirely foreign to their views and purposes, which go
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* See Norris' Depositions.

† See Scriptural Researches.

no farther than gain or ambition may dictate. But, a Minister of the Gospel, and a friend to the Religion of his Country, would be inexcusable if he did not from this source derive his arguments against this iniquity, and regardless equally of their contempt or their persecution assert not only its contradiction to the will of God, but the fatal end to be expected at the divine Tribunal. For notwithstanding all the ridicule of Infidels, this is a doctrine credible on the soundest principles of reason. Nay, these very men themselves, in the permitted prosperity of their present state exhibit no mean proof of its credibility.

In the Scenical description of the great day of Judgment, we read the various pleas that will be made for mercy, but the general sentence is strong against those who, abandoning Mercy, are Workers of Iniquity. I do not mean to assert that these formalities of a Judicial Process will be literally verified: far from me be such presumption: it is possible that these may be descriptions adapted to our present capacities; still they deserve a serious regard; and due attention ought to be paid to our Saviour's own account of that important day.

day. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, before him shall be gathered All Nations, and he shall separate them one from another. And he shall say to them on the right hand, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you; and to those on his left, Depart, and they shall go into everlasting Punishment. And it is worth particular notice, that the immediate and peculiar reason for this dreadful sentence is specified to be the neglect of the Duty of Mercy and Benevolence. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these,—to one of the lowest of the Human race, to one of these innocent and uninstructed Africans, ye did it not to me."

Notwithstanding this application, I wish it to be understood that what has been said is excited solely by detestation of the Crime, and is so far from being directed against the persons concerned as to be founded in the most cordial wishes for their conversion of heart, and the reformation of their conduct. They possibly may be in a wonderful state of self-deception, like that of David, who with cool deliberation and fore-thought contrived and executed a horrid plan of
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complicated Iniquity. Insensible of the application of the Prophet's most pathetic Apologue, he remained in the same lethargic torpor of mind till he was awakened by the declaration, Thou art the man. May a similar delusion be attended with similar penitence, that in the end may be added, The Lord hath put away thy Sin.

It may perhaps be called uncharitable to say of any one that he is in a state of divine reprobation. But is the Judge uncharitable who only declares the Sentence of the Law? he did not make it, pronouncing only its edicts. It would be far more uncharitable, from an affectation of false delicacy, or vicious complaisance, not to warn offenders of their situation by asserting the undoubted doctrine of the Scripture. And if there be a plain and intelligible doctrine there, if there be an incontrovertible truth in this sacred Volume, if there be a God who will judge the world, and if that judgment will decree to every man according to his works, then—They who have shewn no mercy, will have judgment without Mercy—and if there be any who have deliberately and decidedly shewn no Mercy, they will be found amongst those who
practise

practise and those who protect, the Slave Trade.

If our Religion be, as lately represented, a system of falshood and deception, if indeed there be nothing to be hoped for, nothing to be dreaded after Death, but this life shall end not only in Insensibility but in Annihilation, still from arguments of our common Humanity, this merchandize in men would be utterly unjustifiable as its patrons would readily confess, could they but experience the well merited retaliation. But such a profane persuasion is a fatal delusion: they who admit it run a desperate hazard, because they cannot be certain that at Death the human race shall totally and irrecoverably perish; and if not, if our Religion be true, they must awake to horrors from which they cannot be protected by any of the transitory advantages of their former state of Existence. The distinctions of this world will be no more. The elevation of rank, the splendor of abilities, the accumulation of riches, or the insolence of power, will not constitute any difference in the nature of the crime, and will serve only, as an abuse of talents, for an aggravation of Guilt.

May

May they therefore no longer be deaf to the cries of Justice and Humanity, no longer consciously transgress a known duty of their Religion, because to him who knoweth to do Good, and doeth it not, to him it is Sin.



St. Domingo, Nov. 1:

The Planters in that Island having resolved to suppress all mention of Liberty to the Slaves, and to punish most rigorously those who should publish the Declaration of the Rights of Men, assassinated M. Ferrand, one of the Seneschal Judges, and paraded his head on a Pole for maintaining the Rights, &c. We hope the report is not true.

See Gen. Ev. Post, Feb. 4, 1790.

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May they therefore no longer be dealt to
the cries of Justice and Humanity, no longer
get completely wrong, a known duty of
their Religion, demand to him who knows
eth to do good, and doubt it not to him it
is sin.



St. Domingo, Nov. 17.
The English in that Island having re-
solved to support all petition of Liberty
to the Slaves, and to abolish more it
generally those who shall publish the De-
claration of the Rights of Man, & the
Declaration of the Rights of Man, & the
and put his hand on a table for sign-
ing the Rights, &c. We hope the re-
port is not true.
See the same in the 1st of 1790.